

Empirical Evidence of Customers-driven Halal Supply Chain Management Model from The Quranic Verse

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Abstract: Halal and tayyib signify the foundations of research in the Halal Supply Chain (HSC). This study aims to illuminate the consumer-driven aspects of the HSC and introduce the term “Ajka” in The Noble Quran. A systematic literature review (SLR) of 46 HSC literature pieces from 2017 to 2022 reveals trends and research gaps in halal supply chain management (HSCM). The study followed inductive reasoning to explore The Noble Quran 18:19 and modeled the HSC. Content and thematic analysis were performed using the ATLAS.ti qualitative data analysis software. While most HSCM literature has focused on the concepts of halal, tayyib, and khabith, this research has incorporated the selected Quranic verse, revealing HSC variables with a downstream focus: Patron, Price (halal), Product (Ajka), and Place (Al Madinah). A significant number of consumers who are aware, involved, and engaged with halal norms connected to retail points can contribute to the sustainability of the HSC.

Keywords: Halal supply chain, halal supply chain management, halal supply chain model, halal marketing mix, Halal food, Islamic marketing.

I. Introduction

Halal is the Quranic term referring to what Allah has permitted (Islam, 2022a). It serves as a business brand (Wilson & Liu, 2010), a strategic concern for Islamic management (Islam, 2022b), and a business tool for non-Muslim marketers (Islam, 2021). Halal supply chain management (HSCM) oversees halal business networks to ensure the integrity of halal products from production to consumption (Tieman et al., 2012). HSCM must adhere to Shariah compliance by reinforcing halal and tayyib norms throughout the supply chain (Khan et al., 2018).

Previous studies on HSC and HSCM have primarily examined the supply chain and logistics inputs for producers. Ab Talib et al. (2014) connected political, economic, socio-cultural, and technological environments. Another study demonstrated that HSC critically requires government support, transportation planning, information technology, human resource management, collaborative relationships, halal certification, and traceability (Ab Talib et al., 2015).

Syazwan and Bakar (2014) opined that halal logistics encompass transportation, warehousing, packaging, handling, and storage of products in accordance with Shariah. Furthermore, halal logistics are essential components of halal supply chain management (Zailani et al., 2017), and halal logistics service providers contribute to increased satisfaction and trust among halal producers (Selim et al., 2019).

The sustainability of HSC relies on halal integrity (Tieman, 2011). Although halal producers are earnest in maintaining halal status, deficiencies in preparedness, handling procedures, and capabilities among other supply chain members may undermine halal integrity in the HSC (Jaafar et al., 2011). Control measures can enhance HSC productivity (Mohammed & Wang, 2016). Furthermore, consumer awareness of halal integrity is crucial for the HSC. Elements such as halal certification, standards, traceability, dedicated assets, trust and commitment of supply chain members, and government supervision significantly contribute to enhancing halal integrity in the HSC (Zulfakar et al., 2014).

Halal integrity and traceability are interconnected, with halal producers regarding halal traceability as a strategic tool (Poniman et al., 2015). Traceability necessitates knowledge-sharing among supply chain members regarding products and processes (Guercini & Runfola, 2009). Additionally, information dissemination about halal products should encompass labeling and branding for consumers to enhance halal transparency (Poniman et al., 2015).

Earlier studies have not linked the HSC and logistics to specific Quranic verses. Notably, the involvement of consumers in the HSC and viewing HSCM from a downstream perspective is absent in the literature. Furthermore, the modeling of HSC and HSCM in alignment with Quranic verses is rare in the current body of HSCM knowledge. Therefore, this study aims: 1) to conduct a systematic literature review (SLR) of recent HSC research to identify research gaps, and 2) to draw on specific Quranic verses to model the HSC.

II. Literature Review

The Quran entails prescriptive verses about halal consumption, halal business, and precautionary measures to bypass haram (prohibited) business activities. The Holy Quran depicts halal consumption:

كُلُوا مِنْ طَيِّبَاتِ مَا رَزَقْنَاكُمْ

"Eat from the good things We have provided for you" (Chapter 2, verse 57). The verse focuses on *Tayyib* and advocates all to consume good things. Further, the Glorious Quran entails:

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ كُلُوا مِمَّا فِي الْأَرْضِ حَلَالًا طَيِّبًا وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا خُطُوَاتِ الشَّيْطَانِ إِنَّهُ لَكُمْ عَدُوٌّ مُبِينٌ

"O humanity! Eat from what is lawful and good on the earth, and do not follow Satan's footsteps. He is truly your sworn enemy." (Chapter 2, verse 168). The message of this verse applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims, aiming to promote halal consumption by consuming what is lawful and wholesome. Moreover, it prohibits the consumption of what is unlawful and impure.

The Quran restricts to exchange *khabith* with *tayyib*:

وَلَا تَتَّبِعُوا الْاِحْبَابَ بِالطَّيِّبِ

"And do not exchange evil with good" (Chapter 4, verse 2).

The Noble Quran also warns:

كُل لَّاءِ يَسْتَوِي الْاِحْبَابُ وَالطَّيِّبُ

"Say, O Prophet, 'Good and evil are not equal.'" (Chapter 5, verse 100). This verse prioritizes what is "tayyib" (pure and good) and encourages the avoidance of what is "khabith" (impure or evil). Therefore, abstaining from what is impure (khabith) and embracing what is pure (tayyib) constitute the foundational principles of halal consumption.

From the halal producers' point of view, the Quran outlines:

وَأَحَلَّ اللَّهُ الْبَيْعَ وَحَرَّمَ الرِّبَا

"But Allah has permitted trading and forbidden interest." (Chapter 2, verse 275). In this context, the focus is on halal. Alongside the principles of halal, there is an emphasis on avoiding what is impure (khabith) and embracing what is pure (tayyib), constituting the norms for the production of halal products.

Further, the Noble Quran describes:

يَا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا لَا تَأْكُلُوا أَمْوَالَكُمْ بَيْنَكُمْ بِالْبَاطِلِ إِلَّا أَنْ تَكُونَ تِجَارَةً عَنْ تَرَاضٍ مِّنْكُمْ

"O believers! Do not devour one another's wealth illegally, but rather trade by mutual consent." (Chapter 4, verse 29). This verse conveys the significance of ethical business practices, the importance of business contracts, and the avoidance of unethical behaviors. When considered together, the theoretical aspects of halal business encompass concepts such as halal, tayyib, khabith, and mutual agreements among stakeholders.

Halal researchers concentrate on the normative issues from the Quran mentioned above, which serve as the typical theoretical foundations for understanding halal business, consumption, and supply chain dynamics. Nevertheless, researchers have yet to identify specific Quranic verses related to the halal supply chain. The involvement of consumers in the halal supply chain has not received substantial attention either. Furthermore, the HSCM literature lacks simultaneous theoretical and empirical evidence derived from Quranic principles.

III. Research Method

Research approach

The inductive approach focuses on progressing from specific observations to forming broader concepts and theories (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). This method facilitates the advancement of knowledge (Harriman, 2010, p. 6). Inductive reasoning commences with observing a topic of interest and concludes with establishing theoretical foundations (Locke, 2007). Inductive reasoning is appropriate when research questions arise from particular circumstances, and measures to address these questions are lacking (Bergh, 2008).

As inductive research does not heavily rely on quantitative tools and techniques (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018), it necessitates linking qualitative data to draw conclusions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study aims to contribute to the theoretical development of Halal Supply Chain (HSC) by adopting an

inductive reasoning approach. It delves into Quranic verses related to halal business and identifies the 19th verse of the 18th chapter as relevant to HSC and HSCM. The study scrutinizes the verse thoroughly and subsequently derives key variables for the HSC.

Systematic Literature Review (SLR)

A Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is a comprehensive method employed to identify pertinent information and systematically uncover research challenges (Rana et al., 2022; Rashman, 2009). This study focuses exclusively on online, peer-reviewed journals to identify research gaps. The search terms encompassed halal, halal supply chain, halal supply chain management, halal logistics, and halal supply chain model

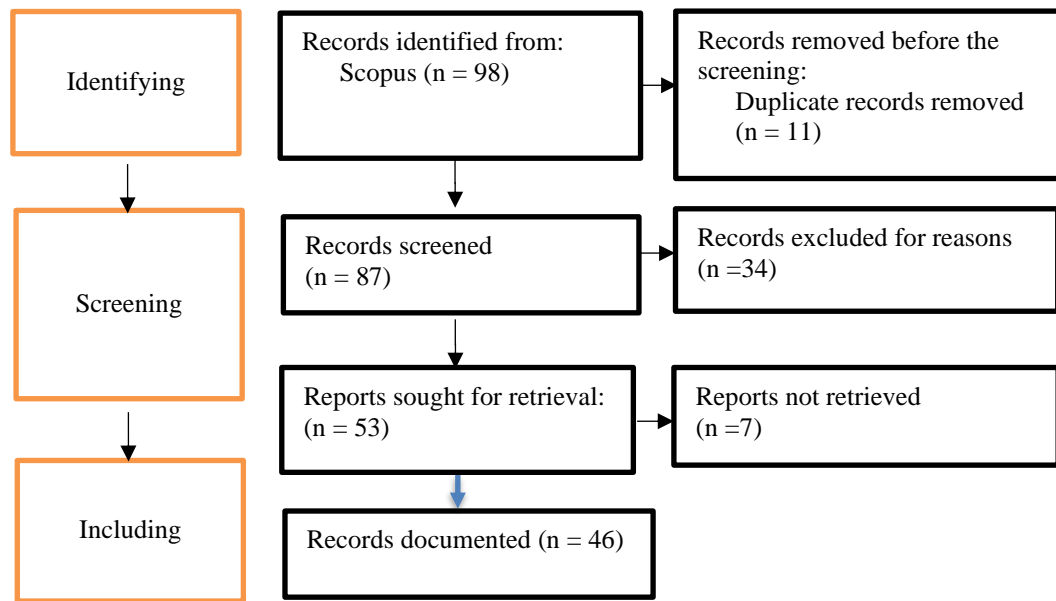


Figure1. The PRISMA flow diagram adapted from Page et al. (2020)

The study followed the PRISMA flow diagram for the Systematic Literature Review (SLR), adapted from Page et al. (2020). The diagram in Figure 1, with three stages, illustrates the process of materials being identified, filtered, and documented. In the first stage, a pool of 98 papers that matched the review's objectives was detected. The second stage involved screening 53 papers that contained the intended materials. Finally, the review documented 46 papers that met the review criteria.

The search criteria encompassed two conditions: 1) only online journal articles published with the SCOPUS index, and 2) only publications from 2017 to 2022. The screening protocol involved identifying the terms "halal," "halal supply chain," "halal supply chain model," and "halal logistics" in the titles, abstracts, or keywords. The documentation protocol included variables related to the halal supply chain and halal supply chain management.

Data collection

This study sourced published papers online from 2017 to 2022 to present the recent trends in Halal Supply Chain (HSC) and Halal Supply Chain Management (HSCM). Additionally, this research collected relevant Quranic verses pertaining to halal business, as well as a specific verse relevant to HSC and HSCM.

Data analysis

Content analysis is employed in qualitative research (Lacy et al., 2015; Elo & Kyngäs, 2007) for a detailed and systematic examination and explanation of knowledge (Unerman, 2000). The content analysis focuses on interpreting verbal or written codes related to the topic of interest (McTavish and Pirro, 1990). The study adopted both content analysis and thematic analysis methodologies, utilizing ATLAS.ti for content analysis. The identified focus items were labeled as codes and subcodes. These codes were analyzed and visualized to illustrate the network relationship among the HSC variables.

IV. Results and Discussion

SLR Findings on HSC and HSCM

Common Keywords in the Studies and Findings

Halal products, stakeholders, and religious beliefs are less commonly mentioned in titles and keywords. Halal products are the central focus of the entire supply chain, receiving significant attention in the studies (Selim et al., 2022; Handayani et al., 2022; Fernando et al., 2022; Khan et al., 2022a, 2022b, 2022c; Usmanova et al., 2022; EI Daouk, 2022). Importantly, halal products hold critical significance in the Noble Quran, representing an intrinsically and explicitly religious element. Key stakeholders for halal include halal producers, distributors, other supply chain members, certifiers, policymakers, governments, and consumers, all playing influential roles (Sumarliah et al., 2021; Haleem et al., 2021; Talib, 2021; Ag Majid et al., 2021; Ngah et al., 2021; Karim et al., 2021).

Table 1. Common keywords in the studies

Authors and Years	Common keywords in the studies
EI Daouk, (2022); Fernando et al., (2022); Handayani et al., (2022); Khan et al., (2022a, 2022b, 2022c); Selim et al., (2022); Usmanova et al., (2022)	Halal supply chain management, Halal integrity, Sustainability, Traceability, Religious beliefs, Management's commitment, Shariah
Ag Majid et al., (2021); Azmi et al., (2021); Haleem et al., (2021); Karim et al., (2021); Ngah et al., (2021); Sumarliah et al., (2021); Talib, (2021).	Halal supply chain management, Halal logistics, Sustainability, consumers awareness, halal standards, and transportation
Ab Rashid and Bojei, (2020); Azmi et al., (2020); Hashim et al., (2020); Indarti et al., (2020); Mohamed et al., (2020); Talib et al., (2020); Usman, (2020)	Halal supply chain model, Halal supply chain management, Halal supply chain, Halal Integrity, Halal assurance, Halal logistics, Halal traceability, Government
Hassan & Sengupta, (2019); Khan et al. (2019); Muhamed et al., (2019)	Halal supply chain management, Halal products, Halal certification
Ali & Suleiman, (2018); Alzeer et al., (2018); Fujiwara & Ismail, 2018); Khan et al., (2018); Kusrini et al., (2018); Rajeb, (2018); Saifudin et al., (2018a, 2018b); Tieman, (2018); Zailani et al., (2018) Zulfakar et al., (2018)	Islamic supply chain model, Halal supply chain management, Halal logistics, Halal traceability, halal certification, Institutional forces, Blockchain, Internet of things, Suppliers' bargaining power
Ali et al., (2017); Fujiwara (2017); Haleem & Khan, (2017); Mahidin et al., (2017); Ngah et al., (2017); Potluri et al., (2017); Rahman & Zailani, (2017). Soon et al., (2017); Wan Hassan et al., (2017); Zailani, et al., (2017)	Halal supply chain, Halal supply chain framework, Halal warehouse framework, Halal certification, Halal supply chain integrity, Halal Integrity, Halal logistics, stakeholders, demand management, low demand, delivery failure

Halal business entrepreneurs need to develop Islamic or halal management principles to establish, maintain, and oversee a supply chain. This chain connects all the nodes involved in the process, starting from sourcing raw materials, producing finished products, and ultimately delivering them to consumers' hands (Indarti et al., 2020; Mohamed et al., 2020; Usman, 2020; Azmi et al., 2020; Talib et al., 2020; Hashim et al., 2020; Ab Rashid & Bojei, 2020).

Halal certification should function as an overarching framework throughout the supply chain. Typically, governments play a critical role in regulating halal certification and addressing policy-related matters to safeguard the interests of stakeholders (Muhamed et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2019; Hassan & Sengupta, 2019).

Halal logistics encompass inputs, information, and outputs involving transportation, handling, and warehousing. Halal logistics are intertwined with both halal integrity and supply chain operations, leveraging technologies like blockchain, IoT, and others for halal traceability (Zulfakar et al., 2018; Tieman, 2018; Wan Hassan et al., 2018; Rajeb, 2018; Khan et al., 2018; Alzeer et al., 2018; Saifudin et al., 2018a, 2018b; Zailani et al., 2018; Fujiwara & Ismail, 2018).

In addition to stakeholders' interests, halal marketers must ensure profitability while also addressing environmental and social sustainability concerns. Upholding the sustainability of the Halal Supply Chain (HSC), generating demand, and managing supply uncertainties pose significant challenges (Haleem &

Khan, 2017; Ali et al., 2017; Ngah et al., 2017; Potluri et al., 2017; Soon et al., 2017; Zailani et al., 2017; Wan Hassan et al., 2017; Mahidin et al., 2017; Azmi et al., 2017; Rahman & Zailani, 2017).

Frequent contents in HSCM research

The content analysis in Figure 2 illustrates the most frequently used words in the research papers. "Halal" is at the center, followed by "tayyib," "haram," and "khabith," which are Arabic terms commonly employed in Halal Supply Chain (HSC) research models. Additionally, researchers have connected halal certification and standards with the HSC models.



Figure 2. Contents analysis of the SLR for HSCM

Supply chain management, integrity, models, logistics, and other technical terms were commonly found in the contents. Additional variables encompass products, product traceability, logistics, and Islamic issues related to Halal Supply Chain Management (HSCM) and Halal Supply Chain (HSC).

Publishing Portals

The Journal of Islamic Marketing stands out as the primary portal, containing eighteen articles on HSC and HSCM. The British Food Journal, also from Emerald Publishers, published four articles on the same topic. Hence, Emerald emerges as the top publisher for HSC and HSCM-related research articles. Another esteemed journal, the International Journal of Supply Chain Management, contributed three articles, followed by two papers from Trends in Food Sciences & Technology from Science Direct. A total of nineteen papers were collectively published in other individual journals.

Research Methods Applied to HSC Research

Qualitative methods are the predominant approach (twenty-eight studies) in researching HSC and HSCM. Most researchers aimed to conceptualize models and develop theoretical frameworks for HSC and HSCM. Additionally, eighteen studies adopted a quantitative approach to comprehend the variables associated with HSC and HSCM.

Publication Quantities in the SLR Period

Figure 3 illustrates that the year 2018 featured the highest number of articles, with eleven published during the SLR period, followed by 2017 with ten articles. The lowest quantity was recorded in 2019, with only three articles.



Figure 3. Publication quantities in the SLR period

2020 and 2021 reported six and seven publications respectively. After that, the curve indicates an increasing trend, with nine articles being published online up to the reporting period in October 2022.

Islamic Principles in HSCM

For a successful HSC, the halal and tayyib process is mandatory. Therefore, HSCM needs to prioritize the halal and tayyib phenomena for the sustainability of HSC (Khan et al., 2022b). Additionally, halal is a subject, tayyib is a process that facilitates halal, and khabith must be removed from the process. Applying the concepts of halal, tayyib, and khabith denotes the guiding principles for HSC, and their values and relationships must be emphasized in HSCM (Alzeer et al., 2018). As a result, HSCM must manage all HSC activities to extend halal and tayyib from production to consumption with improved performance (Khan et al., 2018). Halal standards (Khan et al., 2022b) and halal certification are fundamental for HSCM (Khan et al., 2019). Apart from halal product certification, the halal supply chain itself should be certified. In other words, HSC requires a distinct halal certification (Tieman, 2018).

HSC Challenges

Challenges in halal standards and certification, as well as coordination among supply chain members, are major drawbacks of halal logistics (Zailani et al., 2017). The volatility of halal product demand, inadequate laws, lack of suitable government policies, scarcity of dedicated resources, and bureaucratic halal certification boards are top barriers for HSC (Khan et al., 2022b). Additionally, the absence of halal experts, standards, infrastructure, demand, and intense regional competition are constraints for HSC (Talib, 2021). Soon et al. (2017) also raised questions about differences in halal standards for HSC.

Halal Logistics

Halal logistics are an integral part of HSCM (Handayani et al., 2022). Quality of personnel, information, halal assurance, order quantity, and corrective actions are essential for halal logistics (Zailani et al., 2018). Trust in halal service providers significantly impacts the satisfaction of halal marketers. Furthermore, halal assurance and diverse halal services by third-party logistics providers (Selim et al., 2022), as well as training for halal logistics personnel (Haleem & Khan, 2017), are significant for HSCM.

Key Issues in HSCM

Halal supply chain, halal integrity, halal lifestyle (Handayani et al., 2022), and production process (Sumarliah et al., 2021) are the focal points of HSCM. Trust in the halal service provider (Selim et al., 2022), halal transportation, and warehousing are inseparable from HSCM (Potluri et al., 2017). Additionally, consumers' perceptions, company readiness, and the government's role sequentially hold significance (Muhammed et al., 2019). The eleven factors for HSCM include management commitment and support, government support, the role of halal certifying bodies, integration of supply chain partners, halal resources, halal production systems, integration and support through ICT systems, demand for halal products, competitive pressure, halal marketing, and human resource development (Haleem et al., 2021). Moreover, commercial benefits, halal integrity, and organizational readiness shape HSCM (Azmi et al., 2020).

Stakeholders' Affiliation in HSCM

Internal integration within a firm, suppliers' integration, and consumer integration are necessary for HSCM (Ali et al., 2017). Coercive pressure from halal certifiers, the government, and market structures shape the HSC (Zulfakar et al., 2018). Furthermore, the government must ensure regulations, financial incentives, taxation, infrastructure, guidance, education, and labor supply for an uninterrupted HSC (Talib et al., 2020).

Halal Integrity

Researchers strongly emphasize the integration of halal norms from the point of origin to the destination for halal products. Soon et al. (2017) and Handayani et al. (2022) focused on halal integrity in the supply chain to prevent haram contamination. Mohamed et al. (2020) suggested measuring the effectiveness of halal integrity assurance for HSCM. Ali and Suleiman (2018) concentrated on raw materials, production, service, and the consumer to reinforce halal integrity. Azmi et al. (2020) linked halal integrity with commercial benefits and organizational readiness for HSCM.

Technology for Halal Traceability

Researchers also emphasize testing halal products in case of suspicion. Ab Rashid and Bojei (2020) connected halal traceability and halal integrity with the halal supply chain, arguing that halal traceability significantly relates to halal integrity for HSC. Fernando et al. (2022) added that halal traceability training could enhance HSC. Rejeb (2018) aimed at the halal critical control point, blockchain, and the Internet of Things can facilitate traceability in HSCM.

Modeling Variables in HSCM

Kusrini et al. (2018) developed a model focusing on planning, procurement, receiving and storage, distribution, and returns for HSCM. Hashim et al. (2020) conceptualized the HSC model with strategic supplier-customer relationships and information sharing. Wan Hassan et al. (2018) proposed a three-stage model for HSCM. The first phase requires proper standard formation and integration of halal supply chain stakeholders. The action phase monitors HSC robustness, while the third stage oversees change, adaptation, and follow-up in line with the HSC plan. Saifudin et al. (2018a) framed four elements for HSCM: 1) halal traceability and tracking activity, 2) halal certification and labeling process, 3) halal facilities segregation, and 4) halal quality management. Usman (2020) conceptualized a halal supply chain model involving key stakeholders. Indarti et al. (2020) highlighted the engagement process, quality control assurance, critical success factors, and the production and distribution process in the HSC model.

Galvanizing the specific Quranic verse to model HSC and HSCM

The Noble Quran 18:19 and HSC

The Quran says: فَابْعَثُوا أَحَدَكُمْ بِوَرِقِكُمْ هَذِهِ إِلَى الْمَدِينَةِ فَلْيَنْظُرْ أَيُّهَا أَزْكَى طَعَاماً فَلْيَأْتِكُمْ بِرِزْقٍ مِنْهُ

"So, send one of you with these silver coins of yours to the city, and let him find which food is the purest, and then bring you provisions from it" (The Quran, verse 19: Chapter 18).

The context of this verse narrates those seven young individuals who discovered their king in the state of idol worship. These seven people were devout believers in Allah and abstained from idolatry, taking refuge in a cave. Allah caused them to sleep for 309 years. Upon awakening, one of these young believers suggested sending someone to the city to acquire the purest food (referred to as "Ajka" in Arabic).

The key terms within the verse encompass several aspects: consumers' involvement ("So send one of you"), economic facets ("silver coins of yours"), a specific city or town, place, retailer, outlet ("to the city"), consumers' awareness ("let him find"), the concept of the purest product surpassing halal and tayyib ("which food is the purest"), consumers' participation ("then bring you"), and pure products ("provisions from it"). The verse emphasizes consumers and their awareness, engagement, and involvement in the pursuit of Ajka food four times. Additionally, the verse mentions products twice and specifies a definitive place for the products once. Furthermore, it touches upon the financial or economic aspect once. Therefore, the themes in The Quran 18:19 regarding HSC imply halal consumers, consumer awareness, consumer engagement, consumer involvement, a focus on the Ajka or purest product, a specific place, and halal income.

Halal Consumers

Ensuring a substantial number of halal consumers is paramount for the sustainability of halal businesses and the halal supply chain. The Quranic verse highlights seven young individuals who believed in Allah and sought the purest (Ajka) food. Similarly, both Muslims and non-Muslims are considered halal consumers, indicating that the global market size could be adequate to sustain halal businesses and supply chains.

Consumers' Awareness

The verse illustrates that the seven individuals observed their king and the kingdom's inhabitants associating idols with Allah. As a result, they strived to refrain from slaughtering animals through idolatrous practices, recognizing that such food would not be halal for them. Additionally, the verse implies that worship would be in vain if the food and beverages consumed were not halal, and if the money used for provisions, was not halal. The primary concern is that consuming haram provisions may lead to eternal damnation. Consequently, Muslims should be mindful of their dietary choices, and an increased understanding of halal provisions can drive the demand for halal food and positively impact halal businesses. This, in turn, can bolster both upstream and downstream supply chains.

Consumers' Engagement

Consumer engagement is pivotal to upholding halal integrity. Consumers should have insight into how halal products are produced, how potential haram elements are segregated, and how suspicion is preemptively addressed. Halal producers should facilitate consumers' understanding of halal logistics to ensure integrity. The verse from the Quran highlights the engagement of all seven individuals in their quest for Ajka food. Thus, directing the attention of halal consumers toward these processes can enhance the overall efficacy of the halal supply chain.

Consumers' Involvement

The verse conveys that one of the seven individuals journeyed to the city in search of Ajka food. The implication of the verse is that halal consumers should minimize their interaction with halal products.

Reduced handling reduces the risk of haram contamination. The physical efforts made by halal consumers to obtain products directly from the nearest node of the halal supply chain can enhance halal integrity and satisfaction. Even halal consumers should negotiate with retailers to ensure halal integrity, pressing for separate and careful handling of halal products. By frequently interacting with retailers, active participation in halal purchases can expedite the effectiveness of the halal supply chain.

The Ajka or Purest Product Focus

The verse underscores the significance of "Ajka" or the purest food. The concept of "Ajka" can be correlated with "Zakat" (the obligatory amount believers must contribute from certain resources), symbolizing that halal resources are the purest. Consequently, halal follows tayyib (pure), and "Ajka" represents the pinnacle of purity. The verse implies that the seven individuals recognized that their fellow countrymen, who practiced idolatry, might not produce halal, tayyib, and Ajka products suitable for consumption. Therefore, who prepares these halal products becomes essential in determining their purity. Elements such as raw materials at the point of production, packaging, protection, storage, transportation, and maintaining consistent quality throughout the supply chain are crucial to the Ajka state. Although halal producers and other supply chain members are concerned about halal integrity, halal consumers should assess the purity at the end of the chain before consumption and disposal.

Specific Place

The verse utilizes a definite article ("Ma'refa" in Arabic grammar) to specify the product's location. The verse mentions "Al Madinah," signifying the city or town where Ajka food is available. The seven individuals were familiar with this location before taking refuge in the cave. Naturally, retail shops would be present in the city. Similarly, these retail shops should be well-known. Therefore, the endpoint of the halal supply chain should be recognized, branded, exclusive, and managed by halal experts. A dedicated individual should handle retail deliveries and manage only halal products. Additionally, supermarkets should have a dedicated halal zone, curated by halal experts. Similarly, halal consumers should negotiate with retailers to maintain halal integrity if inconsistencies arise during halal shopping. The trustworthiness of retailers and their capability to handle halal products significantly contribute to maintaining the halal integrity implied by the verse.

Halal Income

The verse also references the silver coins (Oariqikum ha jihi) owned by the seven believers. Apart from their awareness of halal consumer products, these believers possessed halal income. This signifies that halal consumers seek not only halal products but also spend halal income. Consequently, this halal money enters the halal supply chain. Moreover, Ajka products hold substantial economic value. The fact that one of the seven individuals journeyed to the city with silver coins indicates that the money was intended for retailers and, ultimately, would reach halal producers. The verse's decree is that the entire halal chain would not be sustainable if its members do not receive premium monetary value.

Halal consumers serve as the primary sources of generating revenue in the halal supply chain. Since halal consumers encompass both Muslims and non-Muslims, they are willing to pay premium prices for the purity and wholesomeness of halal products. Consequently, the sustenance of the halal supply chain can be ensured through the patronage of a substantial consumer base willing to pay premium prices.

Modeling HSC from the Quranic Verse

Figure 4 illustrates the constructs or variables of HSC through a halal consumer-centric approach. In brief, the figure highlights the four Ps: Patron (Consumer), Price (Halal Income), Product (Halal Product), and Place (Distribution Point). The existence of a significant number of halal consumers serves as a critical success factor. Additionally, consumers must possess an understanding of the halal value, engaging and involving themselves with halal products to maintain the uncompromised halal status of the products.

The valued consumers are prepared and willing to pay a premium price, which could serve as a motivating factor for retailers and producers. The catalyst for maintaining a sustainable halal supply chain lies in offering premium prices for Ajka products. Additionally, Ajka or halal products are available at distinct places belonging to halal producers and retailers. Halal producers and retailers need to effectively manage halal logistics functions to ensure halal integrity, enabling halal consumers to access purified and high-quality halal products. Independent halal producers who do not engage in retail activities must transport their halal products to the city while maintaining halal integrity.

In addition to upholding halal integrity, halal producers must adhere to pricing practices that are free from interest (riba) as mandated by the Quran. The Quranic verse 2:275 prescribes a commitment to halal business practices while prohibiting interest. Injecting interest into business renders it non-halal.

Consequently, the halal supply chain becomes unsuitable for businesspeople who engage in interest-based transactions, despite its halal status for consumers. However, this ruling applies solely to Muslim businesspeople. As non-Muslims do not recognize interest as prohibited, they should involve other nodes within the HSC.

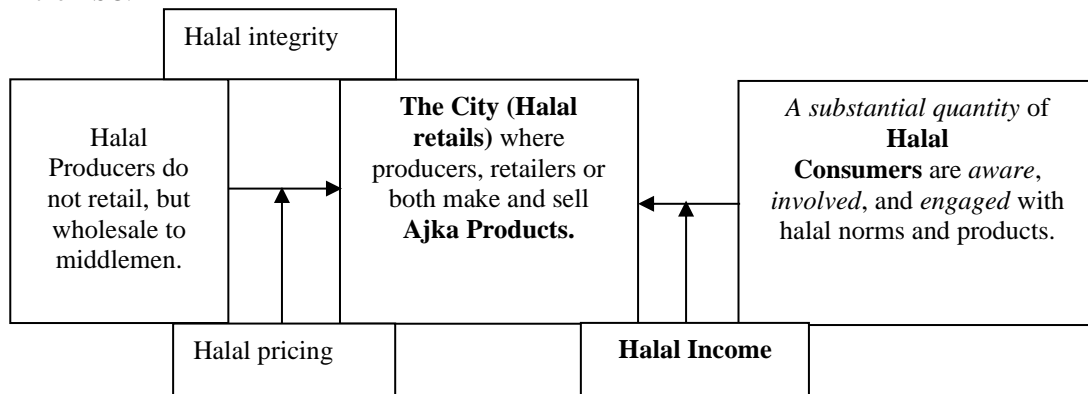


Figure 4. HSC from consumers' perspective

While halal products might experience high demand, the price paid for these products must also be halal, aligning with the guidance of Quranic verse 2:172 which advocates spending from halal income. Nonetheless, this directive is applicable to Muslims, as non-Muslims may lack religious constraints that necessitate the use of halal income for halal products. Irrespective of whether patrons' income is halal or not, money generated from the supply of halal products remains halal for the producers. Therefore, the alignment of patrons' halal income and producers' halal pricing represents spiritually significant considerations for the sustainability of the HSC.

Simplifying HSCM

Figure 5 depicts the network relationship between agents and variables within HSCM. Key agents encompass suppliers, producers, retailers, and consumers. Among these, consumers should possess awareness, engagement, and substantial financial capacity to invest more in halal and Ajka products. Halal retailers will operate exclusive, well-known outlets for the delivery of halal products. Producers must prioritize maintaining halal suppliers and retailers without compromise.

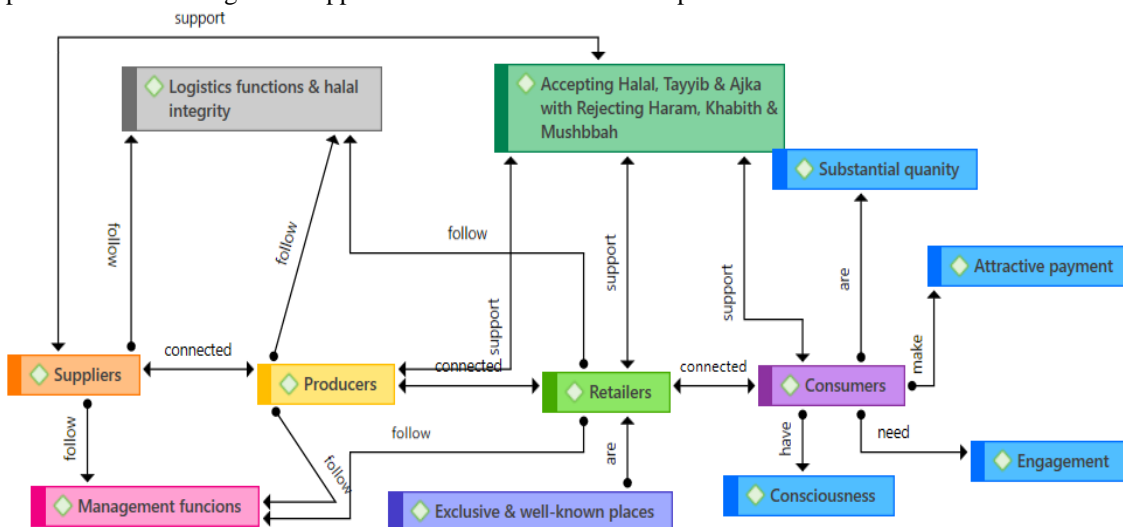


Figure 5. A simplified HSCM model (Source: Original)

The functions of management and logistics must conform to Shariah principles for suppliers, producers, and retailers. Additionally, adhering to the principles of accepting halal, tayyib, and Ajka while rejecting haram, khabith, and mushabbah should serve as a fundamental rule for both HSC and HSCM.

Suppliers, producers, and retailers must rigorously adhere to halal logistics and integrity. Moreover, management functions encompassing planning, organizing, directing, and controlling will vary based on the extent of business involvement of these agents. Importantly, managing consumers and enhancing their awareness and engagement will contribute to an increased consumer base, ultimately ensuring the

sustainability of the HSC. All stakeholders within the HSC are responsible for fostering demand through the enhancement of consumers' awareness.

Consumers' awareness of halal can be influenced by the implications of Quranic verses 2:57 and 2:168. Halal producers, suppliers, and retailers can gain insights from these consumption-related verses to boost halal consumption and create demand. They can shape their promotional strategies based on these verses to encourage consumers to embrace halal products. Additionally, they can establish a Halal Supply Chain (HSC) or a channel for the distribution of halal products, as guided by verse 18:19.

Halal producers, suppliers, and retailers should meet the demand for halal products while adhering to the principles of verse 2:275. Furthermore, they should mutually agree to maintain halal integrity throughout the supply chain, following the teachings of verse 4:29. Verses 2:275 and 3:130 also guide them in avoiding interest (riba), ensuring that their core business operations remain halal. By acknowledging the prohibition of interest for themselves, these stakeholders can advocate for consumers to adopt halal income and steer clear of haram income. Hence, verses 4:2 and 5:100 apply to all HSC stakeholders in their efforts to avoid impurity and suspicion. In this manner, the simplified HSC can align with Quranic principles.

Bonding among HSC stakeholders

Halal certification can strengthen the supply chain (Islam et al., 2023a), and the challenge of halal certification is the variance of halal standards (Islam et al., 2023b). Halal certification can boost the market size consisting of Muslims and non-Muslims (Islam, 2022c). Therefore, halal marketers must design the distribution channel or supply chain according to the Quranic teaching (Islam, 2018).

Studies concerning halal logistics from the consumers' viewpoints show that consumers positively perceive HSC (Tieman et al., 2013) and are willing to pay more (Kamaruddin et al., 2012). The HSC can better serve the halal business with halal clusters consisting of education and research, halal integrity, supply chain, and enablers by prioritizing Muslim consumers (Tieman, 2015). Muslims' awareness of halal products and consciousness of potential contamination with haram (Fathi et al., 2016) has made halal producers adopt halal logistics (Zailani et al., 2018).

Consumers' awareness and knowledge of halal accelerate their willingness to pay more for halal products (Ag Majid et al., 2021). Although halal consumers are linked at the end of the HSC (Ali et al., 2016), they are the pressure groups in the HSC (Ngah et al., 2021). Thus, HSC is about demand management from halal consumers (Rahman & Zailani, 2017), and prioritizing halal consumers is a critical issue for HSC sustainability.

HSC faces threats due to low demand for halal products (Mahidin et al., 2017), quality and price fluctuation, and delivery failure (Azmi et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2022c). The size of the halal producers' firms and the bargaining power of the suppliers are crucial to mitigate HSC risk (Fujiwara & Ismail, 2018). Financial performance and management's commitment (Usmanova et al., 2022) and supplier management (Fujiwara, 2017) can trigger HSC.

HSC is connected with halal standards, performance management, and Islamic work ethics (Karim et al., 2021). Therefore, the Islamic halal supply chain model must blend halal traceability, halal segregation, halal integrity, halal certification, and Islamic managerial principles for HSC (Saifudin et al., 2018b). Hence, shariah, certification, monitoring, and traceability are significant for HSC (EI Daouk, 2022).

Theoretical implications

This study has presented empirical evidence linking halal consumers with retailers and the supply chain through Quranic verse 18:19. The findings have theoretical implications, as HSC and HSCM researchers have traditionally formulated concepts based on the fundamentals of halal and tayyib, without explicitly associating them with specific Quranic verses. This study introduces a Quranic verse into the discourse of HSC, introducing the concept of Ajka, which holds more significance than tayyib. It emphasizes downstream focus instead of the traditional producer-centric approach. Halal consumers, as well as retailers, play pivotal roles in HSC and should be examined more closely by theory builders.

Managerial implications

The empirical findings suggest that the Quran provides a blueprint for how supply chain members, including distributors and producers, can benefit. Retailers can build lasting relationships with consumers to ensure Ajka integrity and consumer engagement in the HSC. The selection of halal retailing outlets should be a well-considered process, taking into account factors such as core competence, capability, ethnicity, religiosity of retailers, and locations, as guided by verse 19:18. Halal producers must acknowledge these crucial factors to maintain the integrity of their products. Producers and retailers should prioritize raising awareness and engaging consumers within the HSC.

Implications for policymakers

Policymakers, particularly government bodies and halal certifiers, should learn from Quranic verse 18:19 to strengthen the bond among halal producers, retailers, and consumers. They must ensure frequent monitoring of retailing points in addition to production units to guarantee the integrity of Ajka. Policymakers should also be responsive to consumers' complaints, demonstrating a zero-tolerance approach toward any compromise in halal integrity and Ajka status. Overall, policymakers must oversee producers and retailers to ensure consumer satisfaction.

V. Conclusion

While much attention has been given to halal, tayyib, and khabith issues, the avoidance of haram or interest (riba) has been relatively overlooked. Furthermore, the acknowledgment of halal income for consumers has been neglected. Therefore, the study recommends incorporating halal pricing and payment into the critical components of the Halal Supply Chain Management (HSCM) model.

Consumer awareness of halal consumption and income is a driving force in HSCM. Thus, fostering consumer engagement is crucial for HSC sustainability. As halal consumers may have limited interactions with producers, halal retailers can bridge this gap by enhancing interaction and awareness. In turn, halal producers must promote awareness among halal retailers to ensure the sustainability of HSC.

The trends observed in the literature on HSC highlight the importance of creating, sustaining, and managing a shariah-compliant supply chain that encompasses all stages of product transformation, from raw material sourcing to finished product delivery to consumers. Halal logistics involves inputs, information, and outputs through transportation, handling, and warehousing. The concept of halal integrity connects logistics and supply chain functions, facilitated by halal traceability technologies like blockchain and IoT. Halal certification should extend as an overarching framework throughout the supply chain. Government plays a critical role in controlling halal certification and other policy-related matters to safeguard stakeholders' interests. In addition to stakeholder interests, halal marketers should also consider environmental, social, and sustainability aspects.

Halal Supply Chain (HSC) signifies an integral part of halal marketing, which comprises the marketing mix components - product, price, promotion, and place. HSC represents the halal place, one of the key components of Islamic marketing. While previous research has mainly focused on theoretical aspects derived from the basic concepts of halal and tayyib, this study introduces a specific Quranic verse (18:19) into the discourse of HSC, introducing the concept of Ajka and other HSC variables.

In the realm of Halal Supply Chain Management (HSCM), people, processes, and intangible elements like halal logistics, integrity, and traceability interact. Producers, suppliers, and consumers represent the living elements within HSCM, influencing both the process and non-living elements in the chain. Importantly, the circulation of halal money among chain members is analogous to the circulation of blood in the body. Without ensuring the circulation of halal money within the supply chain, the sustainability of HSC and HSCM will be compromised, as per Quranic teachings (The Quran, 2:275-276).

The study acknowledges its limitations, given that the understanding of Quranic verses is considered divine and profound. While the authors were equipped with knowledge of Arabic grammar, contextual understanding, and interpretations of Islamic scholars, the study recognizes the limitations of human comprehension. Thus, while this study has inducted crucial HSC variables and modeled HSCM based on the Quranic verse 18:19, researchers are encouraged to explore further variables from the Quran to enrich the understanding of HSC and HSCM.

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